

ERIE-NIAGARA REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP

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MEMORANDUM

To: Co-Chairs Clyde Burmaster & Barry Weinstein, MD

From: Tourism & Culture Chair David Lacki

**Re: June, August, September, October, & November
2006 Meetings**

Date: December 8, 2006

The Erie-Niagara Regional Partnership Tourism & Culture Subcommittee met June 28, 2006 at the Buffalo Niagara Convention & Visitors Bureau (BNCVB), August 15, 2006 at the Niagara Tourism & Convention Corporation (NTCC), September 15, 2006 at the BNCVB, October 26, 2006 at the NTCC, and November 29, 2006 at the BNCVB. Present for the June meeting were subcommittee members Lacki, Casale, Lawson, and Percy, as well as Arts & Economic Prosperity Steering Group members Dr. Ruth Bereson, David Granville, and Barbra Kavanaugh. Present for the August meeting were subcommittee members Lacki, Casale, Lawson, and Percy. Present for the September meeting were subcommittee members Lacki, Casale, Lawson, Percy, and Praetzel, as well as Arts & Economic Prosperity Steering Group member Kavanaugh and ENRP Co-Chair Weinstein. Present for the October meeting were subcommittee members Lacki, Percy, and Praetzel. Present for the November meeting were subcommittee members Lacki and Percy.

Arts and Economic Prosperity Project:

The project has moved forward on several fronts. The database was completed and is constantly being revised based on information gathered over the course of the project. A lingering question is where the database should be housed upon completion of the effort. Some suggestions were the University at Buffalo Arts Management program, the UB Institute for Local Governance and Regional Growth, the Niagara University College of Hospitality and Tourism or Center for Hospitality Training and Research, or either of the tourism promotion agencies. After much consideration, the subcommittee suggested the database being posted on the ENRP website. This will need further investigation to determine its feasibility, and all ENRP members are welcomed to share their thoughts on the matter.

The survey of organizations continued throughout this period. A completion rate of slightly more than 20 percent was achieved through the on-line efforts. Hard copies were mailed out to all organizations that had not yet participated, and follow-up calls were made by Kniazuk, Lacki, Casale, Lawson, and Percy. A few organizations were determined to be ineligible for inclusion or no longer in operation. Through our efforts we have now reached a completion rate of 33 percent, which is in line with other participating communities.

With the exception of the 100 American Craftsmen and Allentown Art festivals collection of audience surveys was suspended to focus on the September 22 deadline for organization surveys (we have since learned that we can submit a few additional organizations by December 8). At the September subcommittee meeting a list of organizations was approved to approach about allowing us to do audience surveys at their venues. Completion of surveys at all the included venues by January 30, 2007 will achieve our target for this aspect of the project. Percy and Lacki volunteered assistance from their organizations, and Kniazuk has been working with a couple of volunteers carried over from another project. The projected main source of volunteers for the audience surveys was AmeriCorps, but this has not materialized due to member cuts at their organization.

Outreach continues with other similar efforts. The project formerly known as the Buffalo Niagara Cultural Tourism Initiative – now called the Advancing the Arts Initiative – is being funded by the Oishei Foundation and largely being conducted by NU. We are sharing information with this effort. Another effort being conducted by the ILGRG has not responded to our outreach efforts. We will continue to pursue data sharing with them.

Funding for the effort also became an issue over the summer. While it was suspended for a time, in the end there will still be twelve months of funding achieved over the course of the effort. Funding was reinstated in November.

New York State Music Fund

The subcommittee approved the pursuit of a grant through the New York State Music Fund. The fund was created by Attorney General Eliot Spitzer from the payola settlement with record companies and radio stations. Several million dollars will be awarded before the end of the year for music related projects across the state.

Our submission is for a project entitled "Bringing the Big Easy to Buffalo-Niagara." It would be a series of 11 events, beginning in April 2007 to coincide with the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage

Festival and concluding on or around February 5, 2008 – Mardi Gras Day. For each event in the series, a New Orleans or Louisiana musician or band would be brought in to conduct a music education program at a local school. This would mainly occur in Buffalo and Niagara Falls public schools, but not exclusively so. We would then try to do some community event or performance with the artist. In the evening there would be a ticketed concert with the artist. Since the grant is paying their fee, all revenue would be profit. That profit would be used to purchase instruments for donation to the Buffalo and Niagara Falls public schools.

The BNCVB is acting as lead applicant and fiscal agent for the project. The Music Is Art Foundation (Robbie Takac's group) is an active partner in all aspects of the project, and the Community Music School is an advisor on the music education component. ENRP will act as the project organizer and will take the lead on securing the talent, the school partners, and the concert venues. There will be a revenue component for ENRP, the BNCVB, and Music Is Art.

There are four distinct benefits to the project: the music education component; the instrument donation; the exposure of this community to a culture and music under-represented; and the employment of musicians still adversely affected by Katrina.

The grant was written by ENRP and submitted on September 12 in the amount of \$109,000 (of a total budget of \$437,180; the remainder being in-kind and sponsorships). Awards will take place in December. Upon securing of the grant efforts will be made to bring in additional partners and sponsors in the areas of media, venues, promotion, and other related fields.

Cross Border Passport Letter

At the June general meeting the subcommittee was asked to draft a letter on the topic of the looming identification requirements for cross border travel and their impact on tourism in the region. That letter is attached. Please feel free to put it on your organization's letterhead and distribute it as you see fit.

Other Topics:

Other topics discussed included the breaking of ground for the Buffalo Creek temporary facility, target figures for visitors to the region, the recently secured TIP grant that will enable the NTCC to purchase a building on Artisan's Alley for a visitors center and offices (congratulations!), tourism signage, a cultural map, trolleys, state parks, the "Tableicious" fundraiser, cultural bus wraps, and planning for the February general meeting that will focus on tourism and culture.